BLOOD RELATIONSHIP

Beni al-ʿAmm

101 619 614 The Rwala belong to the large group of tribes called ʿAneze, which is scattered almost throughout the peninsula and is divided into a southern and a northern branch. The southern ʿAneze comprise the tribes from which are descended the Ab-al-Ḥejl, Eben Ṣabbâḥ, Eben Saʿûd, and various clans of the Ḳahaṭân and Muntifeż. The northern ʿAneze are the Ẓana Muslim and Ẓana Bišr. The latter includes the Sbaʿa, Fedʿân, and ʿAmârât. The former include the Weld ʿAli and Rwala, who are also known as the Âl Ǧlâs. All the tribes and [602] all the clans of the ʿAneze, in the opinion of the Rwala, have a common father and therefore are their *beni al-ʿamm*, their paternal cousins.

● 611 602 609 Only blood relationship on the father's side bestows the right of *eben al-ʿamm*. It is common to hear such a remark as: "His ancestor was not, at a remote period, our relation on the father's side; how could he now be our paternal cousin? *min ḳaddim ǧeddeh mâ hu eben al-ʿamm čêf jeṣir lena-bn al-ʿamm*." or: "The Beni Ṣaḥr are more popular with us than the ʿAmârât, but the latter are closer to us by blood relationship than the former. The Beni Ṣaḥr are foreigners, we and they have no forefather in common. *Beni ṣaḥr aṛlaʿ lena min al-ʿamârât w-lâčen bel-kurba ḥaḍôla aḳrab lena min haḍôlak beni ṣaḥr aǧânib mâ lena w-lahom ǧidden wâḥed.*"

Ẓbêʿân eben Ḥašmân of the Sirḥân tribe had encamped with the Rwala for more than thirty years (in 1909). He married a Rwala woman, and his sister Mahaʾ married Prince Saṭṭâm, to whom she bore a son, Ṭrâd. Ẓbêʿân undertook warlike expeditions and raids together with the Rwala, he wore their costume, his sons speak like the rest of the Rwala, and yet they still belong to the Sirḥân. Their kin, or *ahl*, is not with the Rwala, but with the people of the Sirḥân. The paternal blood relationship, *ʿamâm*, and not the maternal relationship, *ḫwâl*, forms the kin, *ahl*. If one of the [628] sons of Ẓbêʿân were to kill one of the Rwala, he would have to seek refuge with his *ahl*, the Sirḥân, and the blood of the Rwejli would have to be expiated with the blood of a Sirḥâni.

602 827 Kinsmen on the father's side are more often needed than those on the mother's side, *ʿamâmeh alzam min ḫwâleh*. The

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601 name given to a group of kindred descended from the same ancestor; a *ferîž* is also wider than an *ahl*.

611 The *ahl* (for which we shall use the word "kin," in a technical sense) is a group fixed in relation to the individual only, a man's kin differing from the kins of his father or son (although all three kins in this case would include many individuals in common). A man's kin comprises his descendants to the third generation — that is, his sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons. It also includes his ascendants to the third generation — that is, his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather — and the descendants of these ascendants to the third generation from each. Descent is reckoned through male lines only. Second cousins are the most remote collaterals that may belong to one's kin.

An easy way of determining whether X belongs to the same kin as Y is to count from X up to the common ancestor of both X and Y and thence to count down to Y. Provided not more than five individuals are thus counted between X and Y and provided, also, that the common ancestor is not separated from either X or Y by more than three generations, X and Y will belong to the same kin. This conception of the kin explains why every Bedouin knows his great-grandfather, whereas of his great-great-grandfather he is likely to be absolutely ignorant. My comrade Blejhân gave me the following explanation of his own kin: "I am the descendant of Ẓeri, who is descended from Meṣreb. Ẓeri begat Dâṛer and Ṣâleḥ. Dâṛer left Ibrâhîm and Baṛri. Ibrâhîm, my father, left me, that is Blejhân, Ǧî'ân, and 'Ašwân, while Baṛri's sons were Defrân, Rašîd, and Meršed. Ṣâleḥ's sons were named Nedi and Ǧlejdân. Nedi begat Nejtûl and Ḏijâb; Ǧlejdân had Neǧîb and Ṣajjâḥ. All these are my relatives, my *ahl*, and nobody else. My father's *ahl* reached as far back as Naṣṣâr, the father of Ẓeri and 'Abdallâh, but the descendants of 'Abdallâh do not concern me at all; they will not protect me and I shall not protect them." Of Naṣṣâr's father Blejhân knew nothing at all, except that he was descended from Meṣreb's kin (and therefore was known as Eben Meṣreb) and that he had a brother, Ma'rûf by name. But how many generations there were between Meṣreb and him neither Blejhân nor anybody in his whole kin could tell. Blejhân counted himself as being thrice removed from his first-cousin, Defrân (i. e. by (1) his father, (2) his grandfather, and (3) his uncle). Similarly he

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counted himself five times removed from his second cousin, Neǧîb. The older a man grows, the more extended is the circle of his relatives, provided, of course, that he begets sons, for his *ahl* then comprises not only his father and grandfather, if living, and his collaterals, but also his sons and grandsons.

The *ahl* of a Rwejli protects him from injustice and suffers for his guilt. The representative of this blood relationship is likewise known as *ahl*. This representative, that is, the *ahl* in the narrower sense of the word, is usually either the father, the uncle, or the elder brother. Sa'ûd, the son of Prince an-Nûri, had a tent of his own; if he said: "I shall go to my *ahl*," he never went into his own tent but into that of his father, Prince an-Nûri. If the latter was not present, he hastened to his older brother, Nawwâf. A solemn proclamation that somebody has been received into such and such an *ahl* may take the place of blood relationship.

The *ahl al-bejt* denotes the wife of a tent-owner or the wife of his brother, the whole tent being under her control. The phrase *ahl al-bejt* is interchangeable with *râ'ijet al-bejt*, the mistress of the tent. A guest calls for *ahl al-bejt* if he wishes to have a covering for his bed. The Bedouin living in a tent of his own calls his wife *ahl al-bejt*, *ahl bejti*, or *râ'ijet bejti*. If he has children they also belong to the *ahl al-bejt*. The wife never calls her husband *ahl al-bejt* or *ahl bejti*, but *râ'i-l-bejt* or *râ'i bejtena*, lord of the tent, lord of our tent. If she has a little boy, she refers to her husband as *abu flân*, the father of So and So. As long as the Rwejli lives in his father's tent it is impossible to speak of his *ahl al-bejt*, even though he is married and has children. He and his family belong to the family, *ahl*, of his father. If the father dies and his married sons still remain with their families in his tent, it is known as the tent of the sons of So and So, *bejt 'ejâl flân*, or the tent of their mother, if she is alive. The *ahl al-bejt* of such a tent is either the old mother or the wife of one of the brothers who has charge of the tent. If the wife of the oldest brother cannot agree with the wives of the remaining brothers, her husband says to her: "Thou shalt stay in this corner and from today onwards the *ahl al-bejt* (*râ'ijet al-bejt*) will be So and So." Among the Rwala the *ahl al-bejt* is the same as the *'ajle* of the other tribes.

In its broader significance *ahl* denotes distinct tribes that are generally united for their mutual protection. Thus it is